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ABSTRACT

Changing concepts of work and leisure influence each other and are presenting education with a new complex of demands. The arbitrary divisions of a life into periods of education, work and leisure impose related problems, both on institutions charged with preparation and certification and on the individual who meets these divisions with growing skepticism. The job of continuing education is to bring to bear a new perspective on the interrelationships of learning, work and leisure. It must search out more positive concepts of adulthood and better links with industry and community. It must help to articulate and meet the rising need for a wide variety of adult educational experiences. (Author)

WILL THERE BE TIME FOR DREAMS?

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1. The Intersection

What happens if we try to change our environment? How does it affect the accepted ethic of work? Of leisure? Where does learning fit? What effects will monetary discontinuities bring? Will democracy provide continuously adaptive ways to accept change? Can we re-enforce the premise that each individual -- and especially the adult -- requires a positive concept of self?

Deeply interwoven in all this is an underlying question: are we full partners in the people-food-energy challenge of an emerging world system, or do we seek on our own a special form of the leisured society?

We are presently close to those intersections where the precise meaning of learning, work and leisure come into clearer view.

2. Work

Karl Mannheim, that penetrating student of human change, would speak of Principia Media, the levers -- rare but strategic -- which may be used to change a complex social system. He believed that once these levers were revealed, their skillful use would release change and renewal throughout the total system. Perhaps we may say that work is one among these levers, the Principia Media,

of every human society.

What people mean by work seems always to relate to how they live together; to their social organization. The artisans of the high Middle Ages unified their values about working through the guild system which became the very core of home and town life. The guild defined what one did on a job, just as it gave solidarity to how one behaved in family and community life.[1]

Later the industrial society would provide a different relationship as to how one worked and lived with others. It divided work into particular and separated tasks. It organized these tasks in a special work-place -- the factory -- and set them apart from what one did in the other aspects of social and political life. The family grew in importance, as a link between the person and the divided spheres of activity outside. These separations between work and work-place, person and family profoundly influenced the geographical and social organization of community life. They still do.

Technological work would follow, to recapture some of the skill of the artisan and join it with the new specialism of industrial society. The link, however, between job and community continued weak. Occupation disclosed less and less about how an incumbent believed and behaved, and new indicators came into play about how to keep track of others.

So we note that the manner of working influences, and is influenced by, how we live in other ways. Work as a lever of change implicates itself in the challenge now being made to the core values of the American experience. To sight along the trend line of this challenge shows us that work is justified less and less for the welfare of the society, more and more as a prime source of personal satisfaction and autonomy.

For example, work in the early capitalistic era was justified for the sake of austerity and discipline, to store up capital for social and economic growth. In a later era, it would relate to the saving of family assets to exchange for the artifacts and symbols

of affluence in a consuming society. And now we find that people demand enjoyment from work...some would even desire enjoyment without the necessity of working at all.[2]

Holding a job, as a vast literature suggests, shows up in most of everything else we do. It is hard to be a good worker and a good parent at the same time. As many children as not get caught in the middle of this disharmony: hence the childhood roots of an unhappiness which manifests itself in conflict and in the erosion of the concept of self. And the rising assertions of women about their status and power in modern society is fed by the disparity between the overworked male and the underdeveloped female.[3]

What happens in the classroom gears itself to helping people prepare for occupations. Education has swung inexorably toward those skills and attitudes which new and multiplying careers demand. The sorting and credentialling of human talent for which the technological society seems to hunger are activities which the schools and colleges have taken over. To get a better job, we say, is to go back to school.

To understand social life, therefore, and its web of cultural values, we have to look into the meaning of work. We have to know how people feel about their work, just as we must know the views of those who manage it. Educators who profess to teach adults need to know what is happening to the working habits of people, how what they do in their jobs gives character to what they do elsewhere. Indeed, even to understand leisure seems to require that we first understand the meaning of work.[4]

3. Work and Leisure

We seldom speak of leisure, almost never of leisuring -- the original connotation of this word signifying causative action. We speak rather of leisure time, which gives our meaning away. We

explain leisure as that time we have free from work. Indeed we were promised by both the industrial and technological societies that part of our reward, our pay, would be more time for rest and recreation. We would have time to restore ourselves for work and to pursue interests of our own making.[5] To provide leisure for the masses? A revolution indeed!

The early, more classical view of leisure framed it as an activity done for its own sake, for its own end. To leisure in this sense, the classical scholars said, should be the best of human aims, the basis of true happiness. Making a living, they believed, placed an unfortunate limit upon the chance to leisure.

Along the way, however, work got separated from the tasks of family and community. We paid work more attention. We divided it up. We specialized it. We organized it, and extracted some time from it. Such free time was our own: we could do with it as we pleased. But it was tied to work. To get free time, it seemed, we had first to work. What we did in the free time also came to deal with the product of that work. Such links between work and leisure turned the classic views upside down. In the bargain a new meaning was given to leisure.[6]

Time free from work became less free. The fruits of work rushed into it. Advertising directed itself toward free time. The media came to speak of prime time, when work gave way to free time. We use free time to buy the things we make on work time. To repair them, to keep them up, requires free time. The church, as well as city hall, makes its call to us on free time. When a father tries to be a father, if only for a few seconds, he will likely do it on time free from work. The problem of leisure, we say, is that we do not know how to use the time alloted it. Perhaps the real problem is that there is so little time altogether.

On another issue we carve the time of a whole life into segments. When we are young we go to school for a third of our lives, to become an adult, to learn how to work. Then we enter

work in earnest, full-time -- but not quite, for we have that time which is free from it. Much later and older, we stop work altogether, we retire; nothing then but free time. If young, go to school; if adult, work; if old, retire. Such is the path for most of us.[7]

Gravely and anxiously we give to the school the burden for making this learn-work-retire path function. Miss out in school and you can lose it all. We ask the schools and colleges to sort and certify the young, mostly for work. We require of schools that they teach the young how to strive, compete, maneuver, play roles; then how to make their work the dominant sphere for exercising the way they learned to behave in school. We ask so much of formal schooling -- contentment, identity, security, status -- perhaps the way we become as youth overshadows what it is possible to become as adults.

Herein grow some issues for the service of continuing adult education. The first would challenge the field to inquire how it lines up as one among many competitors for the somewhat illusory time which we have free from work. We must ask whether, in helping people do their jobs better, and using leisure time to learn, we risk losing ourselves in the idea of leisure as free time. A second issue arises from such strong equating of education with youth that there is little time or room for teaching what one may expect as an adult. This imbalance would urge our profession to advocate a positive concept of that adulthood.

4. A Concept for Adulthood

We note that a great many young, as well as a growing number of their parents, now exhibit a skepticism about the learn-work-retire pathway. For many of us, that which promises contentment, once achieved, seems not in the end to give it. In its place we are frequently possessed by a dull and persistent fatigue.

Underneath, new and often secret desires stir...for making a decisive turn in the pathway, even a fresh start on a new one. More people are turning to education for help -- to gain time, perspective; skill perhaps, reassurance always. Helping people to do their work better has always attracted the adult educator. But there is a new poignancy about it today -- more private and complex hopes for contentment, more yearnings to find different measures to live by.

One thing adult educators may do to help is to examine a meaning of work that is not confined to the job one holds. The educational and other options now present bring into question the way we allow our jobs to be so much of the measure of all we do and are. To think more broadly about the work we do and the job we hold, and about leisure, and to have a plan for it all, would seem for this day a quite positive way to begin one's adulthood.

One advocate of this broader view of work is Thomas Green, who says, "Paradoxical as it may seem, the problem of leisure in the modern sense will be resolved only in a leisure society in which the opportunities are multiplied and the possibilities maximized for every man to find a work." And, further, he says, "If we accept the distinction between work and job, between making a living and having a work to do, then we shall see immediately that it is simply finding a work independently of job that is the problem of leisure. When the performance of a job corresponds to the fulfillment of a work, then there is no problem of leisure. And when a person who has a job has also found a work to do independently of that job, then there is no problem of leisure. A realistic and educationally practical formulation of the problem of leisure is readily available if only we are willing to sacrifice the assumption that a man's work and his job are in any sense identical."[8]

This refinement -- of job and the relation of leisure to a true work -- will not likely be accepted by very many. It will mean little to the unemployed, the poorly paid, or those who remain

trapped in dehumanizing routine. But the message of the refinement holds. It suggests that positive adulthood may begin with an unwillingness to permit a job to dominate both selfhood and the true work that one might otherwise be called to do.

Positive adulthood is also to know how to choose. When more and more is possible, to choose is to reveal identity, potency, and selfhood. Often we are beaten back by the sheer number and variety of choices in an abstract, impersonal, and technologized community. Kierkengaard spoke of the despair of possibility, adding that "...it is as if everything were possible -- but this is precisely when the abyss has swallowed up the self." So perhaps we may claim that continuous learning involves the continuous choice of spheres in which to prove ourselves.[9]

Positive adulthood is to know how to hope. A young factory worker was reported recently to have said:[10] "It takes so much to just make it that there's no time for dreams and no energy for making them come true...so I decided one day to stop dreaming, and just concentrate on today. I work just as hard now, but I'm relaxed...all I care about now is my family and my hobbies. I do my job only because it pays me enough money so that I can have a house and food." No dreams and no hopes, he says; no way to know the repose of a hope fulfilled.[11]

Positive adulthood is to know how to make interdependent the job, true work, family, and community. The changing ethic of work and leisure must be re-connected with family and community, for the rift between them dilutes personal energy and clouds both identity and imagination. It is among the deep causes of a civilizational fatigue. We are tired from it. Too little seems to matter. We derive little of the delight that learning is supposed to give. Many withdraw. Even more are angry. And too many give up making dreams.[12]

Such fatigue permits the growth of alienation, which

takes root in the most intimate corners of personal and family life. As the 1970 White House Conference on Children would point out: "America's families and children are in deep trouble, trouble so deep and pervasive as to threaten the future of the nation. The source of the trouble is nothing less than a national neglect of children and those primarily engaged in their care -- America's parents."[13]

In brief, then, we who profess adult education will doubtlessly keep on doing what we already do well -- helping people use some of their time free from work to rediscover and renew themselves. But we need also to advocate a positive concept of adulthood, that re-examined view of the youthful strategies learned in school. The concept would, as Green states, have people deal with the strategy of how to implicate in each other their needs for work, leisure, potency and hope.[14]

5. Trend Lines

Not too few ideas but which of them to use seems now the challenge of adult education. Ours is a time of extraordinary opportunity for adult education. New efforts explode. New interests abound in the nontraditional student. Certainly here we are sorting things out. So we need not repeat over and over what we should be doing. What we need to study together and act upon is where the trend lines are, along which change will surely come.

First, we will not want to go off by ourselves. If nothing else, our theme connotes relationships, mergers. We cannot wholly correct what happens in childhood. But we can understand it. The college student, trying to assert self-development as an aim, must be helped with it. Or the person with no college experience, seeing a ring of uncertain prestige, worth, and possibility draw more tightly, needs our attention for programs which in no way may resemble any we have today. Moreover, to become an adult on a full

diet of schooling, with little if any work experience along the way, is a liability well within the scope of our interest. So we ought to see adult education as an expeditionary force, going out to see what the front lines look like, then to come back and share its observations with the common culture.

Second, we must identify and understand the influence of the whole learning space -- to include the workplace, the home, the community. We call to question the cleavage between work and non-work lives. And we accuse ourselves of not perceiving very well the nature of the community, employment, education, family, marriage. Perhaps our problem is that we cannot understand one without the others, and that our way of attempting this is even less well conceived. Whatever happens, we will no doubt see a new merging of the boundaries of education and work; even more likely, we will see them overlap.

Third, we will need to better link our efforts with industry. We seem to know how to tie in with the elite professions. Perhaps the reasons why this happens might help us chart fresh approaches to the industrial world. Industry has awakened to the manner in which employees now seek more satisfaction from their jobs. It also is exploring why workers want to be party to the responsibility for conducting the production process. Industry's search leads straight to educators, even into providing education itself. And, since altering work and non-work roles normally requires financial and emotional support, educators need at least the sympathy, if not the direct backing, of industry.

Fourth, we must become more expert about what is happening to jobs and to the people who hold them. This will take us into a review of how universal the value mold is for work in the schools and colleges, how much youthful ways fail to be challenged and changed by positive concepts of adulthood. With all our sorting and certifying, helping people to find the jobs for which they have the skills remains a still primitive art. Credentialling

techniques, then the jobs we hold and those we may hold; the talent available, the talent needed -- all urge programs and policies not currently present. We should do our part, by setting up commissions and creating centers as needed, to insure that adult education is among those professions which contribute competently to the work and leisure fields.

Fifth, we must turn the expected decline of conventional student enrollments into a permanent acceptance of the adult learner. The people are ready: I hope we are. They seem now to shift interest a bit away from schooling to what one may learn elsewhere, either along with schooling or after. People seek now to disentangle the idea of success from work, and from the affluence that results from work. They attend more now to their hunger to be close to people, to know neighborliness again. And people, more and more of them, are saying now that no job should be without some element that fosters continuous learning.

Sixth, we must adjust to the current swing of popular interest toward the older person. Even as older people themselves speak out more stridently, American society seems now to sense that the increasing proportions of older people in the population, but who are employed in smaller and smaller numbers, (now down to about 25% of the work force), represents a trend that also, unfortunately, measures the human decline in social usefulness and in personal worth and dignity. We have a large task to welcome older people as a major constituency of education -- but recognizing that they possess, and should find opportunities for, a range of interests as challenging as their grandchildren. Some will be searching for a second career. Some will want to re-train for para-professional roles. Others will convert leisure to a true work. These steps, taken in conjunction with governmental and industrial centers will create a respect for the growing proportion of older people in the society.

Seventh, we must continue to make ourselves competent in

the ways of government. Whatever we do, new public policies and changes in old ones will be required. If indeed a new stabilization is going to over-run the historic commitment to economic growth, the notion of productivity, joined to an older and older population, will challenge the cultural restraints which now limit a full place, for women and older people in the work force. Our interest must absorb manpower planning, vocational training, international economics, non-formal education, counselling and placement. To add reality and responsibility to childhood, child labor laws may require imaginative revision. Social Security and pension laws, now being reformed, must enable the individual to create personal answers rather than be strangled by economic and cultural necessity. All but the young full-time student now pay a premium for formal education. Moreover, by whatever name -- deferred education, sabbaticals, worker self-renewal -- we must move education into a new relationship with the length of life, as necessary to our nourishment as human contacts, as job satisfaction, as leisure.

Eighth, we must strive for a new way of using the schools and colleges. Tradition, with all the rise of non-traditional students and programs, still insists that we go early to school for what society says is needed, or to get something we want. Then we depart to another world -- the real world we say -- to return infrequently if at all. We accept schooling like childhood: it ends in due course. Learning from the leaders of community education, our institutions might become more everyday parts of entire lives, where one's true work might be fashioned and encouraged. Perhaps we could imaginatively enlarge the idea of the adjunct faculty. Surely we can invite older people to view the wide range of institutions — which include the libraries, museums and art centers -- as homes away from home, asking them also to help with undone tutoring, and campus and public service tasks, as paid workers or volunteers. As a recent survey of retirees summarized, what they like most about retirement is, in their

words, the "leisure to be busy."[15] Another author defines the role of the "avocational academician" -- one whose job does not match his intellectual attainments, and who needs an educational institution as an avocational workplace.[16]

Ninth, we must devise better ways to help people chart their entrepreneurial instincts for changes in careers and family pursuits. Employers assist people on how to move ahead on their jobs, or how best to prepare for retiring from them. Counselors and pastors assist people who live in troubled marriages. But where do you go to talk over a substantial change in one's life, a whole new chapter in career and family? It seems difficult to know where to take private questions about what these yearnings may require -- a rise of courage, the need for sympathy, financial aids, the plan itself, how to start, when to take charge, and to feel good about it. Among other duties, the trained life insurance agent knows skillfully how to help a family make a plan in the event of death. Should we do less well in helping people make plans in the event of life?

6. Ourselves

Finally, in this caveat entitled "ourselves," it seems certain that adult educators, as they more closely observe what work and leisure mean to people, will have to search for wisdom, to become philosophers. No doubt we will be able to render views about options, truths, mistakes. Perhaps we may be able to judge how adaptive or not the human character can be. But what we cannot do is to know the inner-most thoughts of people about what fate has dealt them, a job they only pretend they like, a hum-drum place in life, a plan that failed, a dream that died.

So we who would search for the wisdom of adulthood will

need to expect it of ourselves. If we believe in continuous learning, then we should be its best examples. If we believe that people should listen to their yearnings, then we should listen to our own. If we believe in leisure as basic to human aspiration, then we should risk it for ourselves.

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NOTES

[1]See Edward Shorter (Editor), Work and Community in the West, New York: Harper and Row, Chapter One, "The History of Work in the West: An Overview."

[2]Amitai Etzioni, "The Search for Political Meaning," The Center Magazine, A Publication of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, March/April 1972, pp. 2-11.

[3]Urie Bronfenbrenner, "The Roots of Alienation," Presented as the Dale Richmond Memorial Lecture at the American Academy of Pediatrics, Chicago, October 22, 1973 (mimeo).

[4]For a classic and extensive review of the present and possible relationships of work and education, see Work in America, Report of a Special Task Force to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Cambridge, Massachusetts, the M.I.T. Press, 1973.

[5]For a thorough and stimulating review of the contrasts between the classical and the modern meanings of leisure, see Sebastian de Grazia, Of Time, Work and Leisure, New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1962, especially chapters 3 to 6, pp. 63-169

[6]Sebastian de Grazia, op. cit., Ch.7, pp. 225-294.

[7]Work in America, op. cit., especially Ch.1.

[8]Thomas F. Green, Work, Leisure, and the American Schools, New York: Random House, 1968, p. 141. Other aspects of this important work are influential to the present remarks as the author ponders the meaning of work and leisure in a society where many seek new life styles.

[9]Ibid, Green comments: "To take the measure of one's potency, to prove one's self, to discover a sphere for consequential action, these are what are involved in any major process of self-identification, and work is a primary means for doing these things. They constitute the discovery of a work to do." p. 138.

[10]New York Times, October 17, 1974

[11]Green, op. cit., says, "Work with hope is work that is performed in the kind of world that will sustain one in the efforts to accomplish his goal... it is confidence and trust in one's world, and is therefore activity that is filled with expectation and anticipation." p. 135.

[12]Norman Birnbaum, The Crisis of Industrial Society, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 161.

[13]Bronfenbrenner, op. cit., p. 2.

[14]Green, op. cit., p. 141.

[15]The Participant, TIAA-CREF, A report on a new study entitled, "My Purpose Holds."

[16]Loring M. Thompson, "Higher Education: From Occupation to Way of Life," Planning for Higher Education, Vol.3, No.4, August 1974.